

The

Ballarat

Naturalist

August 2006



Trailing Goodenia
Goodenia lanata

Québec and New England in the Fall

Speaker: Carol Hall—Geographer and FNCB Member

In September and October of 2005 I was able to experience the autumn colours of eastern North America, something I had always wanted to see. Travelling by minibus with a driver supplied by the Ottawa Outings Club, we travelled through Québec, New Hampshire, Vermont and upstate New York over a 3 week period, finishing in Toronto.

This region is covered mostly by mixed coniferous and deciduous forest, merging northwards in Québec into coniferous forest on the Pre-Cambrian rocks of the Canadian Shield. These ancient rocks have been eroded over vast periods of geological time and shaped by the bull-dozing effects of the last Ice Age which hollowed out troughs now filled with lakes. Soil was scraped off, leaving little time since the ice retreat—10-20,000 years ago—for new soil to form. Consequently soils are thin and infertile, with only the odd patch cleared for grazing in southern Québec province. Land abutting the St. Lawrence River, however, is flat and fertile, with many farms characterised by their red-painted barns.

New Hampshire and Vermont are dominated by the Appalachian Mountains; the areas we crossed were principally granite, but Mt Washington at just over 6200' is formed from schist. These parts of New England were colonised early by settlers from Britain and Europe (the Pilgrim Fathers landed in 1620) and much of the mixed forest was cleared for farming. But as the frontier of exploration moved westward and the fertile soils of the prairies were discovered, parts of this area were abandoned and the forest has re-grown—so a fair proportion of what we saw was in fact secondary growth.

Upstate New York also bears the insignia of the Ice Age; the Finger Lakes, so-called because the 11 lakes splay out like the fingers of a hand, lie in elongated troughs gouged out by the Laurentian Icesheet. The southern end of the lakes is marked by

lobes of terminal moraine, dropped at the edge of the ice and then acting as dams as the ice retreated northwards, leaving lakes trapped between the moraine and the receding ice. The lake levels dropped as the ice shrank northwards, causing the rivers which flowed into the lakes to be rejuvenated i.e. flow faster and erode spectacular gorges and waterfalls through relatively soft shales. We walked along well-made trails in these gorges, and thanks to heavy rain in the previous three days, the roar of brown and cream water boiling through narrow defiles was quite a sight—and sound!

We spent three nights in Québec city, giving us a full day to walk around the compact old town, and a day in Jacques Cartier National Park about 40 minutes' drive north of the city. Established as a fur trading post in 1608, Québec was built on the site of an Iroquois village at a point where the St Lawrence River narrows; natives called this point Kebec. In 1759 the city was taken by the English who permitted the French to retain their language, religion and culture. It grew rapidly as a major inland trade gateway but once steamships could get upstream as far as Montréal, it declined as a major port, instead developing industry and local government.



Chipmunks would hang around picnic areas & take nuts from your hand.

Narrow streets, interesting architecture, historic landmarks and wonderful views have made the city a popular tourist destination and several cruise ships came and went even in the short time we were there.

Jacques Cartier N.Pk was gazetted to protect wolves, caribou, beaver, lynx and marten. The mixed forest provided a wonderful display of colour and, before the breeze got up, lovely reflections in the lakes.

Mt. Washington, the highest mountain in New Hampshire has a reputation for the "worst weather in the world". It experiences bitter ice storms and 300km/hr winds, yet supports a ski industry. Located where moist Atlantic air meets cold polar air, the mountain cannot be taken for granted at any season. Three of our party climbed up following the trails, experiencing a 15° drop in temperature; they returned to base on an expensive bus via the toll road. The rest of us enjoyed the trails lower down, full of reds, yellows, oranges, browns—such colours were enhanced by the dark green of the conifers and by a vivid blue sky.

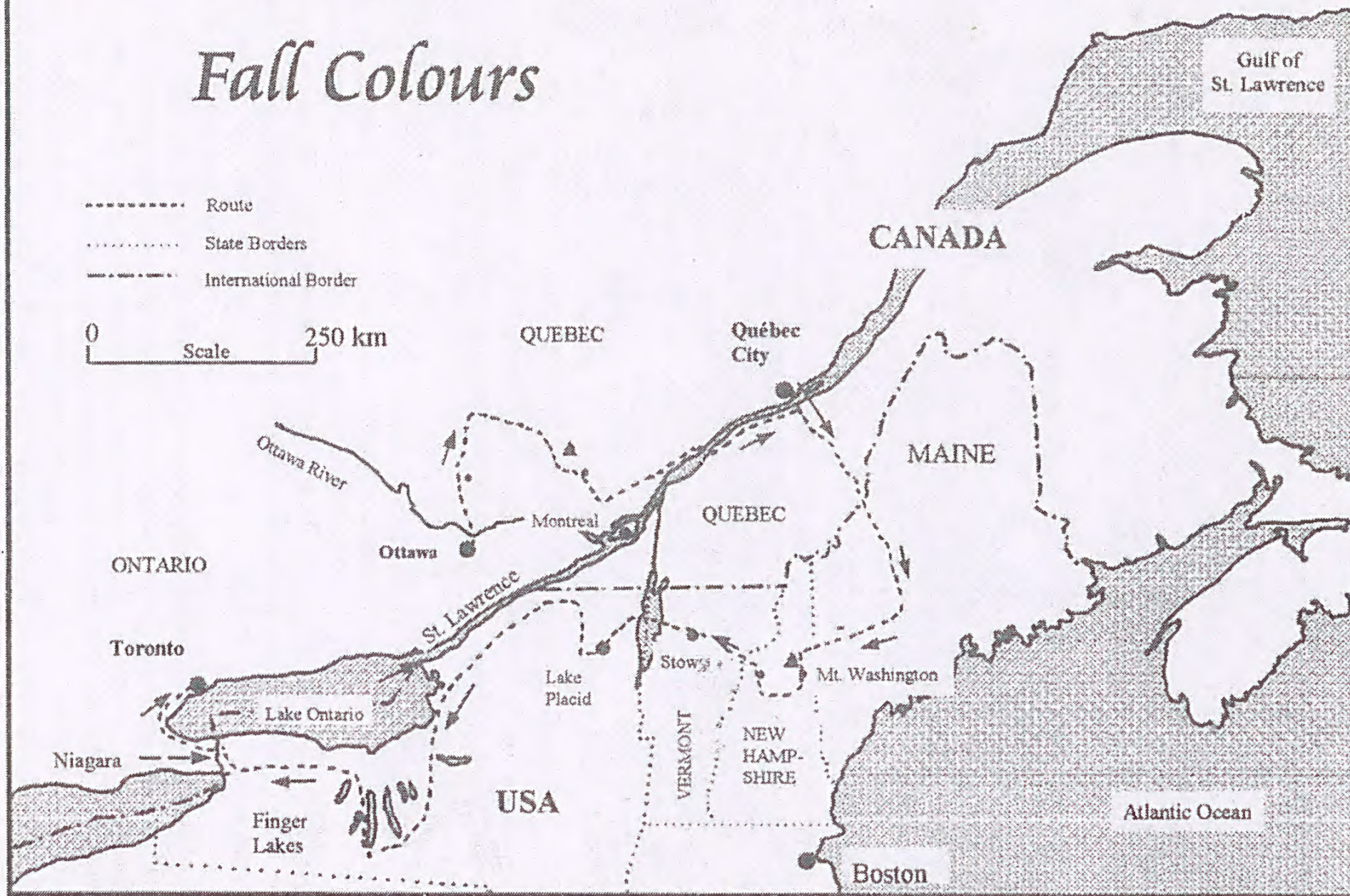
Our stay at Stowe, Vermont provided me with ideal photographic opportunities—overnight rain left the fallen leaves glistening, overcast conditions meant there were no black shadows, so I spent time along a recreational footpath which followed the local river. I found fungi, fascinating tree bark textures and patterns in the ferns.

In the Adirondack Mountains near Lake Placid more reflections were to be seen in the

Fall Colours

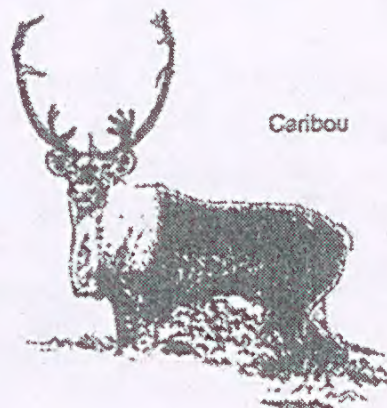
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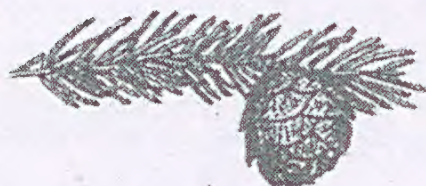


many lakes which dot this area. The town of Lake Placid was the venue for the 1980 Winter Olympics—it boasts 4 covered ice rinks kept frozen all year round (we watched figure skaters practising), ski jumps (the Australian aerial team were there practising for the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin), and all manner of equipment hire. The region had 50km of cross-country ski trails; toboggan runs; downhill skiing; a popular activity is ice fishing—set up a small shelter on a frozen lake, create a hole in the ice and fish through it!

Many of the roads we travelled are designated Scenic Highways for the Fall Colours; websites monitor the progress of the changes and the various tourist boards or state authorities keep you up to date. Leaflets are available to help you identify the more common trees by their leaf colour, shape and month of best colour, but there are many more—a guide to tree bark would help too!



Let us not forget why deciduous trees do lose their green colour and fall: they lose them before the low winter temperatures begin. Chlorophyll is withdrawn from the leaf leaving the underlying colour, and the tree seals off the junction with the leaf stem. When the soil is cold the tree roots are only able to absorb very small amounts of soil water and growth almost ceases, so leaf loss reduces transpiration; in winter there is a decrease in the water content of the cells, accompanied by a rise in the sugar concentration of the sap. (Sugar maples are tapped in early spring when snow is still on the ground). A glance at a climate graph for Montréal indicates around 6-7 months where temperatures would not be over 10°C, when food can be manufactured.



Conifers, most of which are evergreen, are able to start manufacturing food immediately temperatures are high enough and there is sufficient light for photosynthesis. Their sap contains a kind of antifreeze which prevents cell damage during low temperatures, and their branches are springy to cope with the weight of snow.

I cannot finish without mentioning the pumpkins! Grown for their size they may weigh 500-1000 lbs but nevertheless are fragile; they are filled with fluid and need careful handling in harnesses when being lowered onto trailers en route to competition. Smaller ones, often painted or with faces cut out, decorate shop fronts and suburban gardens in country towns. We were fascinated by the variety.

Carol Hall.

Excursion: Fungi in the Wombat Forest

Leader: Les Hanrahan

Unperturbed by the bite in the air, twelve members descended upon Blackwood, situated in a pocket of the Lerderderg River, specifically the forest in the vicinity of the Garden of St. Erth. Among our members was Carol Pope of the FNCV.

A little history of Blackwood: One Edward Hill took steps to publicise the discovery of gold that he had made in the Mt. Blackwood Ranges, in March 1855. By September the rush had reached its climax—13,000 people on the field.

A correspondent writing in the *Argus* of July 1855 said this about the diggings:

Mt. Blackwood beats all other diggings for mountains, ravines and breakneck precipices. Some of the roads are awful to ascend and would almost frighten a highlander. The only consolation is that many of these mountains and all but perpendicular ranges contain enormous hidden wealth which time and patience will fully develop. Rings true today as we searched for fungal treasures.

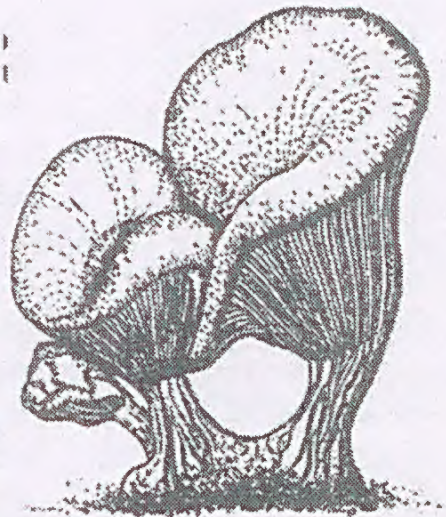
Nuggets found varied in weight between one pennyweight and 21lbs. Mt. Blackwood was named for a Captain Blackwood, commander of the "Fly" from 1843 to 1845. Not long after alluvial mining commenced, quartz mining started too. An early correspondent noted the quiet and regularity prevailing everywhere. A daily coach was being run between Melbourne and Mt. Blackwood by Cobb and Co.

(Reference: *Aspects of Early Blackwood* by Alan J. Buckingham & Margot Hitchcock.)

Pink Heath grew conspicuously, a sturdy *Hakea* grew close to the path and the introduced Holly was present. A Tall Greenhood was noted—normally a spring observation. A stop for lunch in the Jack Cann Reserve—named for a former district forester—was the signal for a bold Yellow Robin to announce its presence. A Kookaburra laughed far off.



Les had attended a Fungal Foray here with the FNCV the previous weekend, so he was familiar with the area and the fungi which were likely to be found. A list of fungal genera and species unearthed over both weekends follows overleaf.



Tony Johns.

<i>Amanita grossa</i>		<i>Marasmiella affixus</i>	Little Stinker
<i>Amanita sp.</i>		<i>Marasmiella elegans</i>	
<i>Bolete multicolour</i>		<i>Marasmiella crini-equi</i>	Horse-hair Fungus
<i>Bolete yellow</i>		<i>Melanotus hepatochrous</i>	
<i>Chalciporus piperata</i>		<i>Mycena interrupta</i>	Pixies' parasols
<i>Chlorociboria auruginascens</i>		<i>Mycena vinacea</i>	
<i>Clitocybe occularia</i>		<i>Omphalina chromacea</i>	Yellow Belly-button
<i>Clitocybe sp</i>		<i>Omphalina umbellifera</i>	Brown Belly-button
<i>Cortinarius abnormis</i>		<i>Paneolus sp</i>	
<i>Cortinarius austroalbidus</i>		<i>Phellodon niger</i>	
<i>Cortinarius sinapicolour</i>	Slimy Yellow Cortinar	<i>Podoserpulo pusio</i>	Pagoda Fungus
<i>Cortinarius sp "fawn"</i>		<i>Ramaria deep purple</i>	
<i>Crepidotus "brown"</i>		<i>Ramaria chraceosalmonicolour</i>	
<i>Dermocybe rotundisporus</i>		<i>Ramaria persanuinnea</i>	
<i>Dermocybe sanguinea</i>		<i>Russula "purple"</i>	
<i>Dermocybe sp "Yellow"</i>		<i>Russula integra</i>	
<i>Dermocybe splendida</i>		<i>Stereum hirsutum</i>	
<i>Enteloma sp</i>		<i>Stereum illudens</i>	
<i>Galerina unicolour</i>		<i>Suillus luteus</i>	Slippery Jack
<i>Geastrum triplex</i>		<i>Trametes versicolour</i>	Rainbow fungi
<i>Gymnopilus allantopus</i>		<i>Tremella fuciforma</i>	
<i>Gymnopilus clelandii</i>		<i>Cordycops Sp</i>	
<i>Gymnopilus junonius</i>		<i>Stropharia sp</i>	
<i>Heterotextus miltinus</i>	Yellow Jelly-bells	<i>Hohenbeuhelia sp</i>	
<i>Lactarius deliciosus</i>		<i>Laccaria sp</i>	
<i>Lentinellus sp</i>		<i>Discinella sp</i>	
<i>Lepista sp</i>		<i>Hebeloma sp</i>	
<i>Leucopaxillus eucalyptorum</i>		<i>Schizophyllum sp.</i>	

Meeting Points

The President welcomed 21 members and visitors.

Reminders – September 15-17 club campout – info sheets still available.

- SEANA campout Maryborough October 13-15 –details available.
- Costermans update CD – sheet available.

Show & Tell/Field Reports

- Greg Binns: news cuttings from Margaret Rotheram including plans to sink HMAS Canberra off Pt. Lonsdale to form a dive reef.
- Les Hanrahan: Fungi photos
- John Gregurke: at Paul's Wetland, 20 Pink-eared Duck – take to flight when approached but quickly circle and land. Pair of Swans have 3 out of 5 cygnets remaining, one killed on Dowling St. 2 species of frogs calling.
- Peter Dalman: in Marie Crescent garden 8 very active New Holland Honey-eaters.

Email from Fran Hanrahan who is teaching at Mzuzu University, Malawi.

Dear FNCB friends,

Sorry that you are not enjoying the mild weather I am having here—cool nights down to average 12°C and up to 25°C when the sun often comes out in the afternoon. The grass is drying off as we have had only one misty wet day for the past 6 weeks—a bit like Victoria I hear. But here the dry weather means time to slash and burn for the farmers which means more or less everyone. City workers have a plot of land somewhere that they grow maize on. The air is thick with smoke and also dust as the roads are generally not paved.

I have only seen a few special birds, such as the awkwardly flying Paradise Whydah (?) and the brightly coloured turaco. Other birds are tiny and too fast for me to identify them. An American, two doors up from my house on campus has a file of 70 pictures of the birds that he has seen here in the past 12 months. I am ignoring the pied crows which are hard to ignore because of their raucous cry and great numbers. Most of them are getting a good feed from the Uni café scraps which are dumped in the bush about 100 yds from me. This piece of bush has a notice on one of the trees to say it is "Protected Forest". Here on the Uni campus it is a remnant of the original Malawi forest but I don't know how authentic it now is with being the local tip. There is one sight that is good for my eyes—nearly every direction I look close to populated areas I can see good old gum trees. The Malawi Govt. has been promoting the planting of them for timber. They certainly grow well here. Not sure if their consumption of great quantities of water is a problem.

Have a happy time exploring the Australian bush for me,

Cheers, Fran Hanrahan.

Calendar

August

- Fri. 4 Members' Presentations.
- Sun. 6 Excursion to Wombat Station, & Gt. Dividing Trail with Les Hanrahan
- Thurs. 10 Working B at Ainley St—weed mat removal. Meet 9.30 am at usual spot—Creswick Rd—bring a knife, gloves. Leader John Gregurke.
- Tues. 22 Committee Meeting @ John & Alison Williams, , 7.30 pm

Sept.

- Fri. 1 Kate Vlcek *Bush Foods*
- Sat. 2 Brisbane Ranges—post-fire recovery with John Gregurke.
- Fri-Sun 15-17 Club Campout Inglewood Motel & Caravan Park.

Supper Duty:

August

Volunteers please!

September

Volunteers please!

October

Volunteers please!

Committee

President Mr. Peter Dalman

Vice-President Mr. Greg Binns

Secretary Mrs. Carol Hall

Treasurer Mr. Les Hanrahan

Miss Helen Burgess.....

Miss Maureen Christie.....

Mrs. Claire Dalman.....

Mr. John Gregurke.....

Mrs. Pat Murphy.....

Mrs Alison Williams.....

Mr. John Williams.....

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Website: [www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au/display clubs.asp](http://www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au/display%20clubs.asp) Search *Environment*.

Meetings are held at the Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Depart from Ballarat Market Place (formerly Creswick Plaza) Creswick Rd., Ballarat (VicRoads 255 M10) at 9.30 am unless otherwise specified.

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